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## Cancer cause myths busted by new report

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**BREAST implants, mobile phones, deodorant and coffee are unlikely to cause cancer, according to a report designed to ease panic that everything can be carcinogenic.**

The new cancer myth-busting report by an Australian specialist assesses the likely risk of 50 known carcinogens and a few old chestnuts to try to put into perspective the risks of contracting the disease.

Smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, deliberate exposure to sunlight and some rare cancer drugs sit in the highest-risk bracket for proved carcinogens.

Among the likely risks were smoking marijuana, tanning in a solarium, eating large amounts of processed meats and living near a waste dump.

Using hair dyes and living near power lines were considered less risky, while inadequate evidence existed for mobile phones, cosmetics and food additives.

Report author Prof Bernard Stewart, from the University of NSW, virtually ruled out risk for a range of rumoured carcinogens including artificial sweeteners, coffee, deodorant, dental fillings, breast implants and fluoridated water.

"No one should seriously lose sleep or change their behaviour in respect of these very, very unlikely things," he said.

"We're working to allay many of the fears that everything can cause cancer because the risks are often insignificant."

The research, released today to coincide with World Cancer Day, ranks potential carcinogens into five categories: proven, likely, inferred, unknown or unlikely risk of cancer.

Prof Stewart hoped the report would clarify confusion and help people identify their risk based on exposure to a cancer-causing agent. "For instance, we know that arsenic is carcinogenic," he said.

"But smelter workers who are exposed to arsenic emissions are much more likely to develop cancer than children who have played on climbing frames constructed from arsenic-treated timber."

Cancer Council Victoria director Prof David Hill said the research would help professionals interpret potential dangers and advise consumers.

"This research doesn't contain any information that should alarm people and shows that the campaigns we've already got in place have been well-focused," Prof Hill said.

Prof Stewart said the new challenge was to reduce the cancer risk faced by growing numbers of overweight and obese people.

- *with AAP*

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